

**From the Homeric *Δημιουργός* to God as *Δημιουργός*:  
A Study of *δημιουργ-* in Ancient Greek Literature**

My proposed doctoral thesis will endeavour to provide a thorough examination of ancient Greek words linguistically related to *δημιουργ-/δημιουργ-*,<sup>1</sup> with a view to elucidating this word group's range of meaning and usage in ancient Greek texts, from Homeric epic to Aristotle.

In its earliest use, the term *δημιουργός/δημιουργός* refers to “workers for the people”, or to “those whose work is of interest to the people.”<sup>2</sup> By extension, *δημιουργ-* words are frequently associated with various kinds of specialized work deemed useful to society, ranging from the arts and crafts<sup>3</sup> (including carpentry/shipbuilding, metalsmithing and pottery), to medicine, prophecy, public office and rhetoric. In Platonic philosophy, *δημιουργός* also comes to refer to God as creator, or *demiurge*,<sup>4</sup> and Aristotle associates the relevant group of words with nature and its creative processes.<sup>5</sup> In early Christian writings, the term often refers to God as the ultimate creative principle.<sup>6</sup> Eventually, the Early Church Fathers would come to employ, though not exclusively,<sup>7</sup> the term *δημιουργός* in the vocative case to address God,<sup>8</sup> thus indicating the idea of a more direct and personal relationship between man and God as creator.

It is thus clear that insight into the meaning of the group of words related to *δημιουργός* is of key importance to understanding early Greek conceptions of work, art and craftsmanship, and is also relevant to several important developments in ancient Greek culture and society, particularly in the areas of science, philosophy and religion. For this reason, mention of *δημιουργοί* is often made in discussions of the above-mentioned topics.<sup>9</sup> However, despite the obvious importance of the group of words related to *δημιουργός*, and in spite of the fact that they have come to impact the modern

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. *δημιουργέω*, *δημιουργικός*, *δημιουργία*, *δημιουργός/δημιουργός*, *δημιούργημα*, *δημιουργεῖον*, *δημιουργίς*, and so forth.

<sup>2</sup> Bader 1965: 133-41; Friedman 2006: 168; Glotz 1927: 24-5; Gschnitzer 2011: 89; Schein 1996 18-9; Nagy 1990: 56-7, and Vernant 1957: 1; 1965.

<sup>3</sup> *Δημιουργ-* words are often found, for this reason, in connection with references to *τέχναι* (thus also coming to refer to mechanisms), as in Plato, *Rep.* 495d. Also in connection with the link between *δημιουργοί* and *τέχναι*, see the discussion of Athena as the patron goddess of *δημιουργοί* in Otto 1987: 56-7.

<sup>4</sup> Havelock 1963: 33-5; On *δημιουργός* in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, see Guthrie 1978: 253-6, 366. See also Mohr 1985, Robinson 1967 and Wood 1968.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g. Aristotle *De Generatione Animalium* 645a9 (*ἡ δημιουργήσασα φύσις*), 730b2, 731a24 (*ἡ φύσις δημιουργεῖ*), 735a28, 738b12.

<sup>6</sup> On Plato's *demiurge* and the impact of that concept on post-Platonic philosophy and early Christianity, see O'Brien 2015.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 4.4.1, who refers to *τῶν ἀγαλμάτων δημιουργοί*, with reference to Pheidias and Praxiteles, among others, and Gregory of Nazianzus, *Contra Julianum imperatorem I (Orat. 4.40-1)*, who refers to soothsayers and those who consult them as *δημιουργοί κακίας*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. John Chrysostom, *Scr. Eccl.: In Sanctum Joannem Praecursorem*, 50. 802.28; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theol.: Liturgia Sancti Gregorii* 36.701.17; Athanasius, *Theol.: Homilia de Passione et Cruce Domini*, 28.240.5 (with the vocative *κτιστά* as well).

<sup>9</sup> For a general overview of the importance of the extant evidence of the class of *δημιουργοί* to various fields of study, see: Applebaum 1992; Burford 1972; Cambiano 1995:90; Frontisi-Ducroux 1975; Glotz. 1927: 24-8; Gschnitzer 2011: 88-91; Havelock 1963: 32-5; Lawall 1993; Mossé 1995: 30-32; Tandy 1997: 166-93; Tournavitou 1995; Vernant 1957, 1965 and Webster 1974.

western view and understanding of creativity and art,<sup>10</sup> what is still lacking, and would be of use to scholars in several fields, is an in-depth study of the meaning, usage and development of these words, in their social, historical, cultural and intellectual contexts. This study thus aims, as a whole, to bring to light the great richness and variety of the ancient conception(s) of *δημιουργός*, *δημιουργία* and related terms, especially in so far as key developments in the usage of these terms can be related to important historical developments.<sup>11</sup>

My proposed thesis will examine all key passages referring to *δημιουργ-* words in chronological order, from the Homeric poems to Aristotle, with additional suggestive comments with regards to the usage of the term by later Greek philosophers and the Early Church Fathers, whose writings show the influence of Greek philosophy.<sup>12</sup> This study will thus focus on ‘milestones’ of usage of *δημιουργ-*, with reference also to relevant epigraphic sources and papyri, with a view to illuminating the full range and history of the *δημιουργ-* root as comprehensively as possible. To this end, my proposed thesis will include the following chapters:

1. Introduction, Including a Brief Etymological Overview and Lexicological Study of *δημιουργ-* words<sup>13</sup>
2. Homeric *Δημιοεργοί*
3. Divine *Δημιουργοί* in 5<sup>th</sup> Century Attic Tragedy, Old Comedy and Classical Attic Oratory
4. The *Δημιουργός* as the Everyman in Aristophanes and Classical Attic Oratory
5. *Δημιουργοί* and The Emerging Disciplines of Historiography and Medical Science: Herodotus and the Hippocratic Writings
6. City Magistrates-*Δημιουργοί* in Thucydides and the Benevolent Creator of Mankind in Xenophon
7. From Skilled Workers to the *Demiurge*: *Δημιουργοί* in Plato
8. *Demiourg-* as a Creative Force in Biology/Science, Rhetoric and Politics in Aristotle
9. Epilogue: Later Greek Philosophy and Early Christian Writers.

As our earliest extant examples of *δημιουργ-* are found in Homer, any investigation of the full range of meaning of this term must be rooted in a thorough analysis of its meaning and use in the Homeric poems. Chapter two of the thesis will thus be dedicated to Homeric epic, wherein the characterization and role of all *δημιοεργοί* will be examined, whether they be literal *δημιοεργοί*, including singers, healers, seers, heralds,

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Havelock 1963: 33-5.

<sup>11</sup> Such developments notably include, for example, the invention of money, the emergence and development of the city state, the flourishing of colonization, the social impact of immigration, the rise of democracy and the development of the sciences of historiography and medicine, the emergence and development of philosophy and the move toward a monotheistic religion, culminating in the rise of Christianity.

<sup>12</sup> For a study of the relationship between early Christian theology and ancient Greek philosophy, see Karamanolis 2013.

<sup>13</sup> This section will endeavour to illustrate this word group’s wide range of applications (artisans, singers, healers, heralds, cooks and confectioners, magistrates/ambassadors, vendors, prostitutes, marriage brokers, as well as metaphorical uses describing natural processes and divine creation, and so on). Cf. Bader 1965.

builders and carpenters,<sup>14</sup> or figurative ones, such as weaving women<sup>15</sup> (e.g. Helen<sup>16</sup> and Penelope<sup>17</sup>), the metalsmith god, Hephaestus,<sup>18</sup> or characters who in certain passages are likened to *αοιδοί*, such as Achilles<sup>19</sup> and Odysseus.<sup>20</sup> The Homeric depiction of *δημοεργοί* is also of great importance to our understanding of the Homeric poet-narrator's<sup>21</sup> conception of the status and role of his own craft, which has been associated with that of the *αοιδοί*.<sup>22</sup> My study will broaden that association to include all *δημοεργοί*, not only the *αοιδοί*.

Chapter three will examine the poetic usages of *δημιουργός* in Attic Tragedy and Old Comedy, as well as corresponding uses in Classical Attic Oratory. Recalling the Homeric Hephaestus who created Achilles' shield, the tragedians Sophocles and Euripides likewise refer to gods as *δημιουργοί*, and primarily as the creators of ills for mankind.<sup>23</sup> Such passages are similar to Isocrates' criticism of orators (11.32.5) who assign to humans the authorship of actions whose only proper *δημιουργοί* are either beasts or gods. By contrast, Aristophanes<sup>24</sup> casts Hermes in the role of the helpful *δημιουργός*.

Chapter four will examine mentions of human and divine *δημιουργοί* in Old Comedy and Attic Oratory, with special attention to Aristophanes' use of the term<sup>25</sup> to refer to the everyday merchants, artisans and vendors of the Athenian agora - even sausage-sellers - for the purpose of making social commentary and to great comedic effect.<sup>26</sup> This use is mirrored in Lysias' oration *For the Invalid* (24.19.6), where Lysias' client is described as one of many artisan-tradesman *δημιουργοί* struggling to make a living in the context of the developed city state. In my view, such usages clearly underline the stark contrast between the mundane realities of professional life in Athens' money-based economy, and the comparative dignity accorded to Homeric *δημοεργοί* in

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<sup>14</sup> See *Od.* 17.382-6, 19.134-6.

<sup>15</sup> For general studies on Homeric weaving women, see: Aubriot-Sévin 2004; Bergren 1980: 19-34; Clayton 2004; Kennedy 1986; Kruger 2001. Cf. scholia b and T on *Iliad* 3.125-8 in Erbse 1989, where Helen's web is likened to a type of the poet's art.

<sup>16</sup> *Il.* 3.125-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Od.* 2.94-110.

<sup>18</sup> Laroq 2010, Rinon 2006 and Taplin 1980.

<sup>19</sup> On *Il.* 9.185-91, see Schein 1996: 18-9.

<sup>20</sup> *Od.* 11.363-9, 13.13ff.

<sup>21</sup> On the narrative voice in Homeric epic, see Goldhill 1991: 1-68.

<sup>22</sup> Key studies of Homeric *αοιδοί* include: Murray 1993: 5, Goldhill 1991, Segal 1994, 2001; Schein 1996 and Vernant 1983.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Sophocles, for example, strikingly uses the term to describe Hades as the "cruel *δημιουργός*" (*Ajax* 1035) who forged Hector's sword, with which Ajax would commit suicide. For this reference, see Mueller 2016: 1. In a similar fashion, Euripides arrestingly refers to the divinity that supposedly created woman as a *δημιουργός κακῶν* (*fr.* 1059 Kannicht).

<sup>24</sup> See *Peace* 429, where the chorus asks Hermes to direct their efforts with the skill of a *δημιουργός* (*δημιουργικῶς*), Hermes himself being, of course, the natural patron god of *δημιουργοί* (heralds, merchants etc.).

<sup>25</sup> i.e. *Knights* 650; *Peace* 297; *Lysistrata* 407.

<sup>26</sup> For similar reasons, the *δημιουργός* seems to have been chosen by Menander as a character study in his play of the same name, which is referred to by the Scholiast on Aristophanes' *Knights* 650 (see Kassel-Austin 1998: 98-100). In Menander's *Demiourgos*, the title character seems to have been a marriage broker, see Webster 1950: 217-18. Elsewhere in Menander, *δημιουργός* seems to refer to the caterer of a feast. See *fr.* 409 Kassel-Austin.

the context of a barter economy steeped in heroic reciprocal values.<sup>27</sup> This contrast will be further brought out in a general examination of the social role and position of craftsmen and artisans in 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens, which will also be undertaken in this chapter, making reference to relevant epigraphic and material evidence.<sup>28</sup>

In chapter five, the relevant terms in Herodotus' *Histories* and in the Hippocratic writings (e.g. in chapter one of *On Ancient Medicine*) will be examined. In these authors, the word *δημιουργός* now becomes relevant to practitioners of the emerging sciences of historiography and medicine. Specifically, Herodotus' emphasis on and praise of travelling *δημιουργοί* like the singer Arion and the medical practitioner Democedes,<sup>29</sup> would seem to suggest their role as providing a paradigm for his own enterprise.<sup>30</sup> Correspondingly, in Hippocrates, medical practitioners are grouped alongside other *δημιουργοί*, in contexts that emphasize different levels of skill and specialized knowledge of practitioners of any given *τέχνη*, along with the social responsibility and attendant honour attached to the practice of such specialized work. This chapter will also include a discussion of Herodotus' interesting use of *δημιουργός* to describe skilled workers whose endeavours imitate natural processes.<sup>31</sup>

Chapter six will be dedicated to Thucydides and Xenophon, as well as to relevant papyri and epigraphic evidence. In Thucydides,<sup>32</sup> we first see literary references to *δημιουργούς* as applying to magistrates of cities<sup>33</sup> and to dignitaries<sup>34</sup> who are involved in the creation and signing of treaties between city states and their colonies, and in organizing constitutions for colonies,<sup>35</sup> in all cases accompanied by a religious and ritual element.<sup>36</sup> In my view, the fact that these officials are, for the most part, envoys suggests the possibility that application of the term *δημιουργός* to such officials is a development of the Homeric usage of *δημιοεργός* applying to heralds. I wish, in this chapter, to explore that possibility.

By contrast, Xenophon uses the term *δημιουργός* in the context of Socratic discussion and argument, in which Socrates refers to humanity as the creation of an intelligent and loving *δημιουργός* (*Memorabilia* 1.4.7). It will be demonstrated that such usages simultaneously look back to Euripides and forward to Plato in their use of *δημιουργός*.

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<sup>27</sup> Unlike the *δημιουργοί* of the Athenian agora described by Aristophanes and Lysias, in the Homeric context, *δημιουργοί* are either itinerant skilled workers practicing their craft from community to community in exchange for hospitality and victuals and in the context of a barter economy, or else, like Phemius and Demodocus, seem to be a part of a powerful *οἶκος* under the protection of a prominent nobleman. On the values of Homeric society, see Adkins (1960), Murray (1978) and Osbourne (2004).

<sup>28</sup> See Destrée and Murray 2015; Mark 1995: 25-37; Pollitt 1987; Seaman and Schultz 2017: 12-22, 177-206; Siebert 1978.

<sup>29</sup> On Arion and Democedes, see Hdt. 1.123-4 and 3.125-37, respectively. Both of these figures are described as paradigmatic "members of the class of *dēmiourgos*" in Friedman 2006: 168.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of Herodotus himself as a *δημιουργός*, see Friedman 2006:165-77.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Herodotus 7.31, on the making of honey substitutes by human *δημιουργοί*.

<sup>32</sup> 5.47 ff.

<sup>33</sup> For inscriptional evidence of *δημιουργός* as applying to officials and magistrates in the archaic period, see Jeffery 1973-1974.

<sup>34</sup> Particularly in the Peloponnese, at Mantinea, Elis and Argos.

<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, a characteristic of these officials is that they all belong to city-states that are in a period of transition between the fall of oligarchy and the rise of democracy, in the context of the Peloponnesian war.

<sup>36</sup> On the quadruple alliance, see Hornblower 2008: 117-9.

Indeed, it is in Plato's dialogues that we find the most extensive and richest sample of usages of *δημιουργός* and related terms. In fact, the work done in the previous chapters will serve as a background to understanding the variegated and complex use of *δημιουργ*-words in the dialogues. The chapter will begin by elucidating the importance of skilled and specialized work and trades in the arguments of the early Socratic dialogues. Following that, the great importance of *δημιουργός* in the middle dialogues will be brought out, as usages in earlier works inform the characterization of the guardians of the ideal city as *δημιουργοί*<sup>37</sup> and earlier scientific and medical use of *δημιουργ*- words notably informs Eryximachus' speech in the *Symposium* (186 d 5-215 b 2). Plato's use of *δημιουργός* culminates in the later dialogues, notably in the *Timaeus*,<sup>38</sup> where an extensive theory of God as creator (*δημιουργός*) is developed.<sup>39</sup> The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the *Laws*,<sup>40</sup> where we see the full range of Platonic usage of the relevant terms with an emphasis on the social role of the *δημιουργός*.

Chapter eight will treat all Aristotelian references to *δημιουργός* and related terminology. The discussion will show how the breadth and variety of the group of words centered on *δημιουργός* parallels Aristotle's broad interests. His usage of the terms generally applies to three distinct fields of study, namely, biology, where it notably refers to natural processes, with nature explicitly characterized as a *δημιουργός*,<sup>41</sup> oratory (*Pol.* 1329a21), and politics, the latter of which refers to the artisan class in the context of the Athenian constitution (*Ath.* 13.2), in my view, harkening back to the above-mentioned passages from Aristophanes and Lysias.

The thesis will conclude with an epilogue which will include a brief discussion of the relevant terms in later philosophy<sup>42</sup> and early Christian writings,<sup>43</sup> showing a development from Plato's craftsman god, who fashions the world out of pre-existing materials, to a conception of God as creator *ex nihilo*, and to indications of a new and more personal relationship between man and God as creator.<sup>44</sup>

The epilogue will also include a study of the elements that are common to all usages of *δημιουργ*- words, running parallel to the broad spectrum of meanings that these would appear to carry. These common elements suggest an emphasis on specialization, skill, contribution and membership in a community and public service, contrasting in interesting ways with relevant modern concepts which emphasize novelty, innovation, individuality and self-expression. It is thus my hope that my doctoral study will serve to

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<sup>37</sup>E.g. *Republic* 395b-c, 421c2 etc.

<sup>38</sup>For example, 40c, 69c4.

<sup>39</sup>For a general analysis of the *demiurge* see O'Brien 2015. On the *demiurge* in Plato, see Guthrie 1978: 250- 320. For a discussion of Plato's theology, see Menn 1995.

<sup>40</sup>For example, 846d1-e6, 848a3-e7, 921a1-d7.

<sup>41</sup>*De Generatione Animalium* 645a9: ἡ δημιουργήσασα φύσις, and 731a24: ἡ φύσις δημιουργεῖ.

<sup>42</sup>Including the writings of Philo of Alexandria and the Stoics. See Reydams-Schils 1999.

<sup>43</sup>Burkert 1985: 327-9; Feibleman 1959; Wallis and Bregman 1992. Jurasz 2015.

<sup>44</sup>For a discussion of Later Philosophy and religion influenced by Plato, see O'Brien 2015. On possible links to pre-Christian divine patrons of *δημιουργοί*, see Otto: 1987: 56-7; Brisson and Frontisi-Ducroux 1992. Generally, this part of the study will endeavour to determine the possible reasons for the prominent use of the term *Δημιουργός* by early Christian writers, especially in so far as it co-exists alongside similar terms such as *κτίστης-κτίζω* and *ποιητής-ποιέω*, which are generally favoured in the Septuagint. One question is whether the favouring of *δημιουργ*- words echoes not only Platonic usages, but also, as I suspect, usages and shades of meaning found elsewhere in earlier ancient Greek literature.

shed further light on this group of *δημιουργ-* words, especially given that it has come to inform modern western concepts of creation and creativity.

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Karen D. Symonds

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Karen D. Symonds

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Karen D. Symonds

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